

CAPTAIN GEORGE'S

Penny Dreadful



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NUMBER 436

IMPERIAL

ROAR WITH ROGERS!

His best comedy since "CONNECTICUT YANKEE"—as the most beloved character in fiction!

Will ROGERS in DAVID HARUM

with Evelyn Venable Louise Dresser

Famous Composer of 1000 Hits and DISCOVERER of STARS!

On The STAGE

In Person!

BENNY DAVIS
WITH HIS FUTURE STARS OF BROADWAY

JACKIE GREEN EDITH MANN
JIMMIE SHEA & GUY RAYMOND
JEAN & JANE BLAIR
TONY ANGELO ALICE MILLER
3 BURKE SISTERS
Morgan Gareau (at the piano)

FRIDAY - BOTTOMS UP REVUE

KIDS!
Special Morning Screen Shows at 10.30 Feature "LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE" Saturday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday mornings. Children 10c Adults 25c Before 11.30

1934

UPTOWN

CHILDREN
Any Show 15c

A Lovable Holy-Terror Whose Faith Meant Life —and Love!

Katharine HEPBURN in Her new Triumph SPITFIRE

DISNEY'S Gorgeous Easteride SILLY SYMPHONY "FUNNY LITTLE BUNNIES"

At 12:50, 3:00, 5:10, 7:20, 9:30.

A WEEKLY REVIEW

DON MILLER

After bemoaning the scarcity of good books on Westerns and cowboy stars, there seems to be a veritable rodeo parade of winners galloping off the presses. Latest to appear on this range is "The Tex Ritter Story," by Johnny Bond (Chappell Music, \$11.95). It's a beaut. Profusely illustrated, too.

Of the singing cowboy stars in the movies after 1935, Ritter's fans have been, if not numerically superior to the Autry and Rogers contingent, certainly the most fiercely loyal. Surprising in a way, because Tex never got the attention lavished on him that the other two did. His first set of pics were good, but they were made for Grand National, a new and struggling company. Afterwards he moved over to Monogram, where the budgets were still tight and all the ingenuity available couldn't cover the tackiness. And after a while, the ingenuity ran out too. Ritter's best films were for Columbia and Universal, but he had to take second billing to Bill Elliott, then to Johnny Mack Brown. He would appear infrequently on the screen after 1945. But to compensate for this, he kept working, playing various dates from county fairs to radio shows. He was a tremendous in-person performer, and probably won as many devotees this way. He sang the theme song for *High Noon*, recorded it, and became one of the big country-Western music names, moving his headquarters from Hollywood to Nashville. He had a brief, unsuccessful fling in politics (emphatically conservative) and might well have continued along those lines at the time of his death in 1974.

Bond, himself a well-known composer ("Cimarron," etc.), appeared in Ritter's Universal films and was a longtime friend and associate. It goes without saying that his book will instigate loud and prolonged cheering from the ranks of Ritter fandom. In addition to the biography, the book's nearly 400 pages include a filmography (and one for Ritter's wife, Dorothy Fay--Bond doesn't do things by halves) and a detailed discography, valuable for its thoroughness; some may be startled to find that Ritter's pre-Capitol recording experience was so extensive.

So much for the Tex Ritter fans. They'd buy it in any case. For the non-Ritter devotee, perish the thought, or the casual observer, it's still well worthwhile. For one thing, Bond can write. For another, he doesn't do it the easy way--there's plenty of research, and it's all documented at the end of each chapter. Bond also takes an approach which, in less talented hands, can be murder; he writes long stretches in dialogue, almost like a film script. Usually, this can sound false and fabricated, but not here. The author has caught the spirit of the man. That's Tex talkin', and no mistake.

Most important, it's a thoughtful recounting of the life of a rather special person. Reading it, we feel we now know Tex Ritter a little better. And are better for it. You can't ask for much more than that.

CAPTAIN GEORGE'S PENNY DREADFUL, a weekly review established in 1968, is published by the Vast Whizzbang Organization at Memory Lane, 594 Markham Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

DON DAYNARD

On May 25, 1977, I wrote Films In Review in New York requesting information from the magazine's readers on character actor Barnett Parker. It's something I have done before, as have many other film buffs. For years, FIR has always been a source of this type of information under the heading "Erudition Wanted and Supplied." For instance, some time ago, a Chris Collier from Australia asked for biographical info on Don "Red" Barry and his films and I provided what he wanted to know from my files.

I've been writing to FIR for exactly 20 years; my first letter ever to the publication appeared in the June/July issue of 1957. So you can imagine my surprise when just the other day I received my letter re. Barnett Parker back from FIR with the following anonymous note typed on the bottom:

"Dear Don Daynard. Why not put an ad in the personals column of FIR? Enclosed is our rate card. I think that this is the best way for you to get all the info you need." No signature, no nothin'. Just the address of the magazine, 210 East 68th St., New York City 10021.

When Films In Review changed editors recently--from Henry Hart to Charles Phillips Reilly--the magazine changed its direction and it appears that this move away from their letters column, which is of course free, to the paid ad, is an effort on Reilly's part to pump up the Bank Account. Commendable, you say. After all, nothing goes for free anymore. But I must admit to a certain amount of chagrin and anger at this policy. I've been subscribing to FIR since 1957. I've had letter requests answered by some of the most knowledgeable film buffs in the world--Don Miller, Bill Everson, Ed Connor and others --and I've passed along information myself to other inquiries, but I think now on the 20th anniversary of my first letter to them that it is time to say "Amen" to what was once a highly readable magazine and inform them just where they can shove my subscription.

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A few weeks ago I wrote to Jack Mathis--author of the heavyweight serial book Valley of the Cliffhangers--and asked him if his new book on Republic Studios is anywhere near completion and also if Snuff Garrett, mastermind behind the Nostalgia Merchant bunch, was causing him any problems. His letter said he has a publishing arrangement with National Telefilm Associates Inc. which grants him the use of the old Republic Files plus any other material he needs for his book and that the Nostalgia Merchant has no power to interfere with those rights insofar as book publication is concerned. As far as the estimated publishing date for REPUBLIC CONFIDENTIAL? Late 1980!! So Republic buffs, hang in there. It's going to be sometime yet before the long-awaited book sees the light of day! And by the way--VALLEY OF THE CLIFFHANGERS is due out shortly in softcover format. Worth getting for a browsing copy.

PETE HARRIS

COMIC CUTS: In the great nostalgia boom of the 1960s and 70s, one group of comic characters from the 1930s and 40s has, as far as I can determine, been ignored--a group whose members were, in many respects, as familiar and ever present as Batman, Superman and Captain Marvel. It's true that these characters might be regarded today by nostalgia purists as having been commercially tainted, but, what the hell, they looked like comic characters, they acted like comic characters and they talked like comic characters, balloons and all. And, they went through comic-like adventures, all neatly wrapped up in a page or sometimes half a page. And if, as well as espousing such standard comic-character qualities as patriotism, honesty, hard work, steadfastness, loyalty, devotion to duty, kindness to animals and the oppressed (in that order) and strength in adversity, they also helped push shoes and cereal and sweets, who can fault them in this the age of commercialism.

I'm speaking, of course, of the advertising comic strips that appeared in newspapers, magazines and comic books in the 30s and 40s. I mean, who can forget Thom McAn And His Magic Bazooka Shoes, Captain Tootsie by C.C. Beck and Peter Constanza, often vs. the wicked Dr. Narsty; Volto From Mars ("When I say 'Volto' my magnetic left hand repels and my magnetic right hand attracts") for Grape-Nuts Flakes; the Adventures Of "R. C" And Quickie for Royal Crown Cola; Popsicle Pete; Wings Winchester for Winchester roller skates; Pepsi The Pepsi Cola Cop, and many others.

Often, real-life heroes were translated into comic strip terms to push products. Former G-Man Melvin Purvis, acclaimed as the man who got John Dillinger, starred in a strip for Post Toasties--"They're just the thing for a Junior G-Man's breakfast." Captain Frank Hawks soared through the peacetime skies for Post's 40% Bran Flakes, and, in a radio tie-in, Tom Mix appeared for Shredded Ralston. Johnny the Bellboy even got into the act for Philip Morris. Sometimes, established characters appeared on behalf of a product, including Little Lulu for Kleenex, Li'l Abner for Cream of Wheat, Napoleon and Uncle Elby for Red Heart Dog Food, and Sam Spade for Wildroot Cream-Oil (Sam, incidentally, later gave way to Charlie Wild).

But, many of the best were originals, conceived for a number of products' advertising campaigns. These included Galahad Jones for Nestle Chocolate and, in the same corporate family, Neddy Nestle for Nestle's Instant Cocoa; Ol' Judge Robbins for Prince Albert tobacco; Fireball Twigg, a Blondie-like strip promoting Post's Grape-Nuts Flakes; Peter Pain ("I'm a fizz...as always...with Ben-Gay"); Li'l Ivry for Ivory Soap; Roger Wilco for Powerhouse candy bar; Adventures of Don Tino for Dentyne; Mr. T. Pott for, what else?, tea; Cheeri O'Leary for Cheerioats, and, one of my all-time favorites, Mr. Coffee Nerves, a mustachioed, top-hatted villain of the old school who hung around likely victims with frazzled nerves muttering negative thoughts in their ears, until...Postum came to the rescue! Exit Mr. Coffee Nerves exclaiming: "Curses! Foiled again! I can't stay here if he's changing to Postum!"